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Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4444th meeting

Friday, 21 December 2001, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ouane	(Mali)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	China	Mr. Chen Xu
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Ms. D'Achon
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Norway	Mr. Strømmen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Mejdoub
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchinsky
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in Angola.

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01-71006 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Angola

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General — Special Adviser on Africa.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Gambari to take a seat at the Council table.

I welcome the presence of Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan among us today.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, members of the Council will hear a briefing by Under-Secretary-General — Special Adviser on Africa Mr. Ibrahim Gambari.

Mr. Gambari: I also would like to say how delighted I am that the Secretary-General has decided to attend our meeting this morning. It shows the importance he attaches to African issues in general and, of course, to the long conflict in Angola in particular. I feel like a member of the faculty of a secondary school addressing a gathering at which the headmaster is present, so if I am a bit nervous, please forgive me.

I am delighted to brief the Council on my last mission to Angola. The mission took place at the invitation of the Government of Angola, upon the directive of the Secretary-General and with the blessings of the members of the Council, which was so powerfully expressed at the last open meeting on Angola, on 15 November. The main objective of my mission was to hold consultations with the Government, the political parties, the churches, civil society representatives and other concerned parties on how best the United Nations can help accelerate the peace process in Angola within the framework of the Lusaka Protocol. I was also in Angola to discuss with the authorities and national and international non-governmental organizations the ways and means to improve the humanitarian situation facing the people of Angola.

The highlight of my visit was the meeting with President José Eduardo dos Santos, who for the first time received me at the beginning of my visit and not, as usual, towards the end. I believe this was a deliberate act meant to set the tone for subsequent discussions with the relevant members of his Cabinet. I also met with the Ministers for External Relations, Mr. Miranda; of Interior, Mr. Dos Santos "Nandó"; and of Planning, Ms. Lourenço.

Meetings were also organized with the President of the National Assembly, Mr. Roberto de Almeida; the Secretary-General of the ruling MPLA party, Mr. Lourenço; representatives of the Inter-Denominational Committee for Peace in Angola (COIEPA) and other members of the civil society; leaders of the parliamentary groups; UNITA parliamentarians; UNITA Renovada; humanitarian agencies; national and international non-governmental organizations; the Troika and other members of the diplomatic corps; the group of donor countries; and other stakeholders in Angola.

When I briefed the Council on my last visit to Angola, in May this year, I mentioned that there were three sets of issues that constituted the outcome of that visit, and in fact compared them to a set of lights.

First, the green light: these were issues on which the Government would like to begin immediate engagement and cooperation with the United Nations, such as the management of the Fund for Peace and National Reconciliation, the design and implementation of pilot projects for demobilized soldiers and resettled internally displaced persons, and assistance in the electoral process.

Secondly, the amber light: these were issues on which the Government informed me that more time was needed for further consideration before giving definite responses, such as the modalities for the disarmament of UNITA combatants and the collection of weapons, as mentioned in the Government's four-point peace plan; direct contacts with UNITA's Jonas Savimbi; and the possibility of establishing humanitarian corridors.

Thirdly, the red light: these were issues that were regarded as non-negotiable, such as any attempt to resolve the Angolan conflict outside of the Lusaka Protocol framework or any attempt to renegotiate the Protocol itself. In this regard, however, the Government recognized that some adjustments may have to be made to the provisions of the Protocol in order to take account of the changed realities on the ground in Angola.

I am happy to report to the Council that during my last visit to Luanda, from 8 to 14 December, all these issues were discussed extensively with the Government in a spirit of give and take. My overall assessment is that progress is being made on all fronts and that the main elements of the United Nations policy and strategy for helping to end the conflict in Angola appear to have been reaffirmed.

Let me reiterate to the Council the fundamentals of this policy. First, there can be no military solution to this conflict. Secondly, sanctions are an important instrument with which to press UNITA to abandon war and return to the political process. Thirdly, support for civil society is an important aspect of the peace process. Last but not least, the Government should be encouraged to implement programmes of political and economic reforms, which, we believe, will be additional contributions to the peace process.

In my last briefing to the Council, I informed it that the Secretary-General had approved the dispatch of a multi-agency exploratory mission to Angola from 17 to 27 September 2001. Its report was carefully reviewed in the Secretariat. A second mission was then sent to Angola ahead of me, and it stayed in Angola during my visit to discuss with the authorities the findings of the earlier exploratory mission and prepare a programme of action. The Minister of Interior, who is also the Chairman of the intersectoral Commission for peace and national reconciliation, informed me that the Government of Angola is fully satisfied with the recommendations made by the mission and the spirit of cooperation that has been established between the Government team and the United Nations team.

A technical team is to be sent for a follow-up mission in January-February 2002 for a four-week stay in Angola to work on details of the programme of action and the implementation strategy. Three main areas of cooperation and support have been identified, as follows: first, the design of an integrated development pilot programme in two provinces involving the creation of capacity to plan and prepare appropriate budgets at the provincial level, and rehabilitation of infrastructures and preparation of programmes to alleviate the social hardships of the people and employment generation; secondly, the design of a programme for peace and reconciliation in which the Fund for Peace and National Reconciliation is expected to play a leading role; and thirdly, the design of a civil registration programme and other programmes to strengthen institutions, which will address the current obstacles to free and fair elections, envisaged for 2002.

With specific regard to the proposed national elections, the Government continues to express its commitment to hold them soon. However, it is becoming clear that the second half of 2002, which the Government had indicated as the date for the elections, is not realistic. The discussions of the fundamental principles for a new Constitution appear deadlocked, the main obstacle being whether the provincial governors should be directly elected or, as the case is now, appointed by the President of the Republic.

However, this and other contentious issues may be resolved by February 2002, when the Constitutional Commission will submit a draft of the Constitution. It is important to remember that the draft will then be submitted for public debate, which may take another six months before the final draft is approved. Furthermore, it is estimated that currently more than 60 per cent of Angolans do not possess any form of identity document. A multi-agency technical team will be helping the Government to draw up a programme for civil registration, which is crucial for electoral registration and other issues.

The humanitarian situation was generally described as worsening in a number of areas. The number of internally displaced persons and refugees has grown beyond the capacity of humanitarian agencies to cope. It is estimated, for example, that the number has reached 4.1 million — and one must recall that this is a country with a total population of about 12 million.

This rapid and large increase in internally displaced persons is attributed to the current Angolan Armed Forces offensive and to the so-called mop-up operation undertaken by Government forces. The mop-up operation is a strategy consisting of moving people

from their areas of origin into camps for internally displaced persons with the aim of depriving UNITA of its support base, especially for food and recruitment of military personnel. In any case, the increase of internally displaced persons has led to high rates of malnutrition within the camps, among other problems.

Nevertheless, the Government has made enormous efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in the country. For example, it has allocated additional funds to tackle the increasing influx of internally displaced persons to urban areas, resulting from recent military offensives by Government forces. Moreover, the Government has made plans to resettle 500,000 people by early next year, and the United Nations agencies have pledged to resettle another 150,000. The Government has also closed down the transitional camps, whose facilities are grossly inadequate. The situation in the nutrition centres showed some improvements from May to early September, although it appears to have worsened from about two months ago because of the new movement of the population from rural areas to urban areas.

Moreover, the Government has improved access and food delivery to many parts of the country that were not possible to reach by road. The World Food Programme (WFP) representative, who is also Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for Angola, informed me that the WFP convoys have started delivering food by road to places that could not be reached until a few months ago. The Government has also repaired some of the infrastructure, such as bridges and airstrips. The airstrip in Kuito, particularly, is currently being repaired, and access has improved on the whole in the south, the north and the centre of the country. Only the eastern province remains rather difficult to access.

Furthermore, the Government has instructed the defence forces to deliver food where security cannot yet be guaranteed, while attempts are being made to meet the security standards imposed by humanitarian agencies and to extend State administration to those areas.

The challenge now being faced by the authorities is how to consolidate the delivery of humanitarian aid to places that are now accessible by road as a first step and gradually expand access to the entire country. However, the Government is of the view that there is now no need for the establishment of humanitarian corridors in classical terms, because UNITA does not control any known territory. Nonetheless, it is willing to consider the idea of "safe areas" where humanitarian assistance can be delivered to those who badly need it. These places will be secured and protected through an arrangement which is satisfactory to the United Nations, humanitarian agencies and other interested parties.

Now I would like to come to the crux of the matter: the peace process itself. With respect to the prospect of peace, it is gratifying to note that for the first time, there is a convergence of opinion among the people consulted that the United Nations should play a more proactive role in the peace-process. The Government reiterated that it would have no objection to the role of the churches in facilitating contacts with Savimbi's UNITA, but that this should be done through the United Nations, which should resume its role as mediator. Meanwhile, the Government believes that UNITA's military capacity has been almost totally destroyed and that only a miracle could save it. According to the Government, UNITA is operating with residual forces only, without any capacity to attack military targets. It controls no territory or municipalities and is facing numerous defections from its rank and file, including some top officers. In fact, we are told that right now there are a total of about 200 officers left with Savimbi's UNITA. However, the Government recognizes that UNITA is still capable of conducting attacks of terror, which undermine peace and the socio-economic development of the country.

On their part, UNITA parliamentarians also reiterated the organization's commitment to peace through a dialogue within the framework of the Lusaka Protocol. However, they cautioned that the Lusaka Protocol should not be used simply as a platform to obtain UNITA's surrender. The Lusaka Protocol should be implemented with the necessary adjustments, as indicated in the 12-point peace plan that UNITA had communicated to the United Nations. They also emphasized that, while the group could largely convey UNITA's position, the final decision still lay with UNITA leadership, headed by Mr. Savimbi. Hence, if peace is to be achieved, dialogue with Mr. Savimbi should be reopened.

In this regard, we have recent information to the effect that Mr. Savimbi has expressed interest in re-establishing dialogue with the Government in Luanda, within the Lusaka Protocol, but there is a need to authenticate this source. Throughout our consultations

in Angola, I appealed to the parties, saying that it was time to take the peace process off the streets and to find the right channels through which serious discussions on peace could take place. The Government and UNITA parliamentarians appear to have seen the wisdom in this appeal.

On a related matter, my delegation has also had the opportunity to discuss with the authorities the issue of the collection and destruction of weapons, in the event that the peace process accelerates. The Government had indicated, in its four-point peace plan, that the United Nations should assume responsibility for this task. Accepting such a task would, however, involve an adjustment to the current mandate and capacity of the United Nations Office in Angola (UNOA). As we know, its current mandate allows UNOA to have two dimensions: capacity-building in the area of human rights and helping to promote humanitarian assistance.

We now have a subject which is ripe for further discussions in the Secretariat and, later, with the Council. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that, meanwhile, the pilot programmes that have been discussed with the United Nations technical teams and the Government of Angola will have a component of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants into civilian life, in which the Government of Angola will take the lead. The Government has also informed us that there are a number of UNITA combatants defecting to Government-controlled areas who are arriving with their weapons. Hence, it is important that a mechanism be considered and designed which can facilitate the collection and destruction of such weapons.

In conclusion, there is indeed now a window of opportunity to advance the peace process in Angola which the United Nations should explore. In this regard, the Secretary-General has directed me to continue consultations with certain Southern African Development Community (SADC) leaders, other African leaders and other Member States on the way forward. Under the guidance of the Secretary-General, we in the Secretariat will continue to work on these issues and also to work with the Council and all other interested parties to find ways to accelerate the peace process in the context of the Lusaka Protocol, so that peace can come to Angola sooner rather than later.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Gambari for his detailed briefing.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Mr. President, we appreciate your initiative in convening this meeting on Angola. We thank Ambassador Gambari for his briefing. He is too modest in his characterization of himself. His remarks reveal him to be a leading authority on the subject as well as an achiever in the field.

His enumeration of the requisite programmes is deserving of high attention. Doubtless, problems persist. The deterioration of the humanitarian situation is troubling, and the increase in the number of internally displaced persons is also disturbing. Mr. Gambari has rendered a human service in identifying these problems, which must be addressed.

What he says about the peace process, though, is heartening. We are extremely encouraged also to have in our midst today our Secretary-General.

Bangladesh has always supported the important role that the United Nations has to play in conflict situations, Angola among them. That role has been considerably strengthened through the sanctions that are currently in force, which continue to have a negative impact on UNITA's war-making capability, and through the activities of the United Nations Office in Angola (UNOA). Ambassador Gambari's own efforts in recent months have proved crucial in providing it a direction that will immeasurably assist in the resolution of this long and seemingly intractable problem. In so doing, new initiatives, under the guidance of the Secretary-General, will be required. We will continue to support efforts to that end.

I shall confine myself to focusing on three issues that we consider specifically important today. First, given the context of continued conflict, how can the humanitarian situation best be addressed, and in particular the problem of access? It is clear that, as long as the conflict persists, we must continue to devote attention to the plight of the war-affected population. A lingering problem impeding the delivery of humanitarian assistance has been the lack of safe and secure access. We note with appreciation the efforts of the Government in facilitating this access in areas under its control. We believe that more efforts are required in that direction meaningfully to improve the situation of the affected population.

My second point concerns relations between the United Nations and the Government. We are pleased to note the strengthening of such relations in recent times as a result of the good work done by UNOA on the ground. Again, Mr. Gambari's efforts have nurtured and furthered an active interest in Angola on the part of the international community and the United Nations. We have, on earlier occasions, expressed our appreciation and support for the role and activities of UNOA. We believe there is scope for expansion of these activities into new areas such as the pilot project for war-affected and demobilized combatants. Perhaps it is time to address this issue.

Providing alternative forms of livelihood to displaced persons and to those who have renounced violence is extremely important in driving home the message of peace. The United Nations should do all it can to help the Government in this endeavour.

Finally, it is clear that these steps alone will not achieve the ultimate objective of peace in Angola. The complexity of the situation demands what the Secretary-General has described in his most recent report (S/200!/956) as "creative ways". Paragraph 14 of that report states his conviction that "the conflict could not be solved by military means alone", and we fully share that view. The peace process cannot progress unless there is real dialogue between the parties. It is very difficult tc envisage a dialogue in the absence of a ceasefire. Within the framework — and, indeed, on the basis — of the Lusaka Protocol, a dialogue should make it possible to discuss all issues of concern, if the parties are serious in their pronouncements in favour of peace. We are in favour of the Council's sending a strong signal to all in that regard. Given the achievements of the Council in continually monitoring the effective implementation of the UNITA sanctions, there is now a need to provide a big push. This will bring us closer to our goal in this part of Africa and to the resolution of a problem that has persisted too painfully and for far too long.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): Mr. President, let me join you in welcoming the Secretary-General to our discussions this morning on the situation in Angola. The 26-year-old war in that country is among the most protracted conflicts on the continent of Africa, and we are very pleased with the attention that the Secretary-General and his Under-Secretary-General have devoted to this issue. It is in this context that we wish to thank you for convening this meeting to allow us to hear a briefing from Under-Secretary-General Gambari on his recent visit to Angola, which took place in early December.

We can recall that, at the beginning of this year, there were small signs of hope as an atmosphere more conducive to dialogue and confidence-building began to emerge between the Angolan authorities and the United Nations. Within Angolan society, too, seeds of peace were being sown, largely due to the influence of civil society, including the church and humanitarian and other organizations, which were agitating for peace.

One of the most important outcomes of Ambassador Gambari's visit is the fact that the United Nations has been invited to become more fully involved in the peace process. We think that this is an extremely important development, because we believe that the United Nations can play a role in bringing together disparate elements of civil society in Angola and in seeking to set the stage for dialogue with UNITA.

We remain convinced that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Angola and that sustainable peace can be achieved only through dialogue and negotiation. As we have stated time and again in this Council, the primary responsibility for the conflict resides with Mr. Savimbi and UNITA. We also reaffirm that the Lusaka accords and the relevant Security Council resolutions remain the most viable basis upon which to build. It is time for all to accept that a political solution is the only route to securing peace in Angola. UNITA must play a more constructive role in society if it expects to be part of the political process. In this regard, we are pleased to hear from Under-Secretary-General Gambari about the possible willingness expressed by Mr. Savimbi to hold discussions with the Government of Angola. We hope that this can soon be authenticated.

The instrumental role of civil society also provides a glimmer of hope which must be encouraged. It is our view that such groups can provide a medium through which negotiations between the warring parties can find some common ground. Recent reports, which have been borne out by Ambassador Gambari's briefing, indicate that organizations including religious, women's and other interest groups have been active in demanding an immediate bilateral ceasefire and that they have pledged to work for peace in Angola.

We have also noted the call for a mechanism which will facilitate the integration of national non-governmental organizations and civil society into the political dialogue process. We agree that this is a very useful initiative as Angola prepares for elections. We have noted, however, that Ambassador Gambari has pointed out that the timetable for elections might be delayed. In this regard, we think that the assistance of the United Nations — through its technical team, which will be visiting Angola in January — is extremely important, as it will be focusing on the programme for civil registration and on the peace and reconciliation programme, all of which will have to lay the groundwork for elections.

Another area to which my delegation wishes to refer is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Ambassador Gambari has pointed out that we will need to look more closely at the present mandate of the United Nations Office in Angola if it is going to be involved in this area; we certainly believe that it is an area in which the United Nations needs to become more fully involved, including, possibly, through funding through the regular budget.

Another area is the humanitarian situation. The recent humanitarian report illustrates that there have been no significant improvements in the humanitarian situation in Angola in 2001. We welcome the launching of the 2002 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Angola, and note that $114 million is needed to provide food security for some 4 million Angolans — 25 per cent of the country's population — displaced by war.

We have taken note of the situation that Ambassador Gambari referred to with regard to the increasing numbers of internally displaced persons, and we wish to commend the Government for the action it is taking to resettle some 500,000 by early next year. We have also noted that it has closed the transition camps and is providing greater access for food delivery. We also wish to commend the various humanitarian agencies, particularly the World Food Programme, for their efforts to bring relief to the people of Angola.

Finally, as Jamaica prepares to leave the Security Council, we wish to encourage the international community and the parties in Angola to keep hope alive in the peace process in Angola. It is time for the parties involved to rise above narrow self-interest and seek to promote what is good for the future development of the country and the people as a whole.

In closing, I wish to place on record our commendation of the Secretary-General, and also of Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his own sterling efforts at promoting the cause of peace in Angola. We also wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for reappointing Ambassador Gambari for another year as Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for Special Assignments in Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Jamaica for her kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Strømmen (Norway): First of all, we would like to thank Ambassador Gambari for briefing us on his recent and very important trip to Angola, and to acknowledge the presence here today of the Secretary-General.

Judging from the positive and constructive atmosphere during the visit, the working relationship between the United Nations and the Government seems to be very good. We are, of course, happy that this is the case.

As far as the peace process is concerned, we are encouraged by reports that there might be signs of progress. In this regard, we strongly urge the parties, especially UNITA, to show the necessary flexibility and will to depart from the path of war and terror and work for a peaceful solution to the conflict. We are also happy that there now seems to be an opening for civil society to play its important part in the process. We and the Council have repeatedly underlined the essential part that churches and other civil groups can play. We would like to commend the Government for reaching out to such groups.

The humanitarian situation in Angola is cause for great concern. All reports confirm that the situation continues to be extremely difficult for large parts of the population, especially the internally displaced, the main reason for that being, of course, the continuation of the conflict. We would like to commend the Government for increasing its efforts in trying to help those in need, and we encourage it to continue to do so.

In this connection, we again appeal to Mr. Savimbi and UNITA to refrain from further violence. Mr. Savimbi is still playing a key role in Angola, in spite of the fact that he himself is rather

silent for the time being, the Council should continue to hold him responsible, in spite of the fact that some say that his days are numbered and that his military capacity has been reduced to almost nothing.

Finally, let me repeat that we are encouraged by the new developments in Angola. We hope that the United Nations and the rest of the international community will be able to help the Government build on these positive developments to create peace and a better future for the Angolan population. Norway will continue to be part of that effort.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): It is indeed remarkable that the Council's last substantive meeting this year is being devoted to the situation in Angola. It is important that the Security Council continue to stay genuinely engaged in the situation in that country and to follow closely the progress in the peace process.

It is a pleasure to see the Secretary-General among us, participating in today's meeting.

My delegation is grateful to Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for his extremely interesting and informative briefing on the recent visit to Luanda and for his comprehensive analysis of developments on the ground. We see a lot of optimism in Mr. Gambari's presentation today and I wish to hail his efforts in trying to advance the peaceful settlement of the quarter-century-old conflict that continues to ravage Angola and to bring suffering to the people of the country.

The recent decision of the Government of Angola to request the churches to act as intermediaries between the Government and Savimbi-led UNITA is an important step towards the resumption of dialogue and the revitalization of the peace process in the country. My delegation wishes to underline, as we have on previous occasions, that a negotiated settlement of the conflict remains the only viable alternative to the prospect of another long decade of guerrilla warfare. We would like to express our strong conviction that the resumption of dialogue with UNITA should be based on the principles of the Lusaka Protocol and aimed at its implementation, not at its renegotiation.

In this situation, it is important that the international community and the United Nations maintain the pressure on UNITA, urging it, including through a consistent sanctions policy and other means, to remain engaged in the dialogue with the Government of Angola. Mr. Savimbi must show his commitment to a peaceful settlement and give up his policy of continuing the terror campaign. UNITA's sustained military activity is unacceptable and gives the lie to its repeated declarations that it seeks a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We are most satisfied to see the increasing role of civil society in the political life of Angola. Recent events have clearly demonstrated the enormous potential of this movement, not only in the advancement of the peace process, but also in the building of a democratic and stable future for the country. I wish to emphasize in this connection the importance of the steps taken by the Government of Angola in the past months and years, aimed at promoting the democratisation process, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. This has had a most positive impact on the strengthening of civil society as an indispensable part of the democratic institutions of the country. We also welcome other forward-looking measures taken by the Government, which have become a valuable contribution to peace and reconciliation in Angola.

Real success will be difficult to achieve without a steady improvement in relations between the Government of Angola and the United Nations and the strengthening of an atmosphere of trust. We urge the Secretary-General and his Special Adviser on Africa to continue playing an active role in the search for peace and reconciliation in Angola. In this connection, I would like to ask Mr. Gambari what the next steps will be in the resumed process of dialogue between the Government and UNITA. Does he see any new role for the United Nations if this dialogue continues — and continues successfully?

Finally, I wish to use this opportunity to reaffirm Ukraine's strong support for the peace process in Angola. We will continue to do our utmost to contribute to achieving this goal and will work together with the Security Council and the Government of Angola on this path.

Mr. Chen Xu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We should like to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing on the situation in Angola. We appreciate his efforts to promote peace in that country. The peace process in Angola is currently in the process of changing and Mr. Gambari has said that there is now

a window of hope. The situation is generally encouraging.

We thank you, Mr. President, for having arranged this open meeting.

Early this year, President Dos Santos made a four-point proposal for the achievement of peace in Angola. Since then, his Government has repeatedly reiterated the validity of the Lusaka Protocol, indicated its willingness to continue to strive for national reconciliation and comprehensive peace and emphasized its readiness to pursue, together with civil groups in Angola, ways, formats and specific methods to attain reconciliation and peace.

The Chinese delegation highly appreciates the efforts made by the Angolan Government. It is regrettable, however, that the armed faction under the leadership of Mr. Savimbi is turning a deaf ear to the positive proposals of the Angolan Government and continues to engage in terrorist activities, undermining peace in Angola and causing many casualties. Mr. Savimbi and the armed faction under his leadership must be held fully responsible for the repeated setbacks in the peace process in Angola.

In such circumstances, we demand that Mr. Savimbi and the armed faction of UNITA respond immediately and positively to the good will of the Angolan Government, lay down their arms and enter peace negotiations with the Government with the priority of exploring ways and means to establish a ceasefire and to resettle armed combatants. This will help create conditions conducive to a political settlement of the Angolan conflict and to improving the humanitarian situation in that country.

In the context of the Angolan peace process, we commend the approach taken by the Angolan Government in giving full play to the role of civil groups. We believe that the Lusaka Protocol and the relevant Security Council resolutions continue to be the bases of the peace process.

We hope that the United Nations will play a greater role in re-establishing peace in Angola. In this respect, we support the ongoing efforts of Mr. Gambari and wish him greater success.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): I thank Ambassador Gambari for what I think was a most important and most significant report on his visit, which I think was itself most important and most significant. I would like to express the thanks of my delegation to the Government of Angola for the extremely useful and forthcoming reception it gave Under-Secretary-General Gambari in Luanda. I apologize to him that I had to duck out of the room for the last few minutes of his briefing. I do not know about others around the table, but we are certainly finding that the approach of the holiday period is making life busier, not more relaxed.

Others around the table, I think, have heard enough from the United Kingdom about our general approach to Angola and I will not repeat it now. I think that the principles on which our policy is based are well known and that they accord with those of other delegations around this table. I would like, however, to ask Mr. Gambari a number of questions arising from his very useful and stimulating briefing.

The crux of the matter, as he said, relates to the peace process and to how that might be restarted. That is, after all, what we are all here to try and help bring about and I think it deserves the utmost priority. Professor Gambari said that he urged everyone he spoke to that it was time to take the peace process "off the streets". I would strongly agree with that, and it would be very helpful to have confirmation that that was the resonance that Professor Gambari found among the wide range of people he spoke to in Luanda. If that is the case, then it seems to me that we do have an opportunity to help make a contribution to move this forward. Again, it would be helpful to hear if that is the case — how Under-Secretary-General Gambari would see the process of re-establishing regular contact between the two sides and with UNITA evolving.

I would endorse what he said about the importance and the significance of the Government's decision on a potential United Nations role here and a potential role for the churches, but it would be interesting to hear anything further Under-Secretary-General Gambari might want to say about how that would work out and how the current sanctions regime might affect this, because as he rightly pointed out, sanctions are not an end in themselves. Nor are they an instrument of punishment. Rather, they are an instrument of pressure and persuasion to get UNITA back to the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, which we all support.

Secondly, a number of speakers around the table have picked up on the role of civil society. Ambassador

Kuchinsky of Ukraine has just made quite an extensive statement about it. It would be helpful to hear from Under-Secretary-General Gambari whether there is anything further he would want to say at this stage about how he sees the role of civil society, how the United Nations might be involved in that general process and whether there is anything more the Council could do to support it.

Finally, I should not finish without referring to the humanitarian situation. I was sobered to hear Under-Secretary-General Gambari's report on this situation. Sadly, overall it must be bad news, but the measures that the Government of Angola is taking are good news. Nevertheless, I think that we must all be extremely concerned about the prospect of over 4 million internally displaced persons and refugees, and I would be interested to hear whether Under-Secretary-General Gambari has yet been able to form an assessment on whether forced displacement is increasing or decreasing and on what the international community can do to help more.

In this context, it occurs to me that it has now been well over a year since the Council was last briefed on the humanitarian situation in Angola, and I think that it might be helpful for us to repeat that exercise fairly soon, also hearing, too, from the Government of Angola. I was very impressed with the presentation that Sergio Vieira de Mello gave the Council over a year ago when he was still in charge of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. I think that presentation was very helpful in sensitizing Council members to the need. If a similar briefing would help to sensitize the donor community further to the need to help, I think that would be a real contribution to mobilizing resources and funds and trying to do something to help these poor people.

Ms. D'Achon (France) (*spoke in French*): We are delighted today to meet with Ambassador Gambari, back from his recent mission to Angola, and we are all grateful to him for his efforts to find a way conducive to dialogue and reconciliation in Angola between the Government and UNITA on the basis of the Lusaka Protocol.

The consequences of the Angolan conflict are tragic for the Angolan people, a great majority of whom have never known peace. Fighting and guerrilla activities spread terror among the people there. Lines of communication are the target of deadly attacks, and the several million mines planted in the territory make road travel extremely dangerous.

We are all aware of the cause of this interminable war that has ravaged Angola without letup since its independence in 1975. It is Jonas Savimbi's UNITA which bears the main responsibility for this tragedy, because they have not implemented the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol, because they have re-armed, and now, again, because they are still carrying out intolerable attacks throughout the country, including against the civilian population.

Even if the Government has managed to considerably weaken UNITA's forces, the latter has nevertheless preserved its guerrilla capacities throughout the country, as borne out by the recent terrorist attacks directed against the civilian population that the international community unanimously condemned. That is why, on behalf of the international community, the Security Council enacted sanctions against Mr. Savimbi's movement. We believe that these sanctions are necessary to force UNITA to abide by its obligations and to return to the path of peace. They must be implemented, and once again we would like to take this opportunity to salute the efforts of Ambassador Larrain and of his Monitoring Mechanism.

Nevertheless, as many speakers have pointed out, clearly there is no military solution to the Angolan crisis. We are therefore happy to note that recently chances for a resumption of the dialogue have emerged. This has to do with the dynamism of civil society, and particularly that of the churches. I wish to recall here that the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize was awarded on 12 December to Monsignor Zacarias Camuenho, the Archbishop of Lubango and Chairman of the Inter-Church Committee for Peace in Angola, for his action in support of a return to peace in his country. But this was also the result of the efforts made by the United Nations, and more specifically, those of Mr. Gambari. Ambassador Gambari is indeed one of the craftsmen of the good relationship now enjoyed between the Angolan authorities and the United Nations. This should be welcomed.

We are also pleased to note that, for its part, the Government is responding positively to those efforts. The policy of openness, attested to by the Angolan Government, is an encouraging sign of this. We could, inter alia, refer to measures taken for amnesty for and reintegration of former combatants and the

announcement of elections and institutional reforms to which the international community, in due course, should lend all necessary support.

We should also welcome the gestures of openness by the Government towards Jonas Savimbi by having invited him to dialogue regularly under certain conditions and by requesting him to set a date for the cessation of hostilities or solemnly to renounce war.

Furthermore, as was stated by Ambassador Gambari, the Government has just authorized the United Nations to play an even more important role to facilitate a dialogue between the two parties to the conflict. We hope that UNITA will act on these signs of goodwill about which Mr. Gambari spoke. Like the United Kingdom representative, I would like to hear his views on the reality of this commitment.

The international community should make a rapid and strong commitment to work with Angola in the peace process and to help rebuild the country. Right away, though, it should help the Angolans to address the grave humanitarian situation there. A solution must be found that will provide security for the provision of humanitarian assistance, for facilitating contacts between non-governmental organizations and the people and for enabling humanitarian organizations to establish contact with all parties so that they can do their jobs.

Indeed, it continues to be too difficult to gain access to people in distress. The poor condition of landing strips, the lack of fuel and the precarious security conditions are obstacles to intervention by humanitarian organizations. We were encouraged to hear Mr. Gambari say that progress has been made in this area. But it is up to the Government and to UNITA to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout the territory of Angola, including in the East. UNITA absolutely must stop threatening the security of humanitarian convoys. And for its part, the Government must do everything to ensure their security in the areas under its control.

In the longer term, we would recall that national reconciliation and a return to stability in Angola also require an improved economic and social situation, the establishment of the rule of law and the protection of human rights. In all those areas too, the international community will have a key role to play in support of the peace process.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): I too, on behalf of my delegation, would like to express appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Gambari, for his briefing this morning on his visit to Angola. We are very pleased that he has reported in positive terms on important elements of the visit, especially in relation to the peace process. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and Mr. Gambari for their work in advancing peace and reconciliation in Angola.

Ireland is especially pleased that the visit appears to have further strengthened the relationship between Angola and the United Nations. We believe that the best prospect for peace in Angola rests on close collaboration between the international community and the Angolan authorities on a wide range of issues. We are greatly encouraged by Mr. Gambari's comment that the Government in Luanda is amenable to the United Nations exploring with UNITA the question of whether UNITA is willing to engage seriously in a process for peace in Angola.

We believe that Mr. Gambari's remarks on the existence of a window of opportunity in some of the areas which were the subject of the inter-agency team's visit to Angola were especially interesting and hopeful. We would strongly emphasize the importance of examining how best now to operationalize the role of the United Nations in those areas, if these are deemed to be serious opportunities. Ireland continues to strongly believe that the Lusaka Protocol must be the basis for peace in Angola. The Protocol should chart a political path for all shades of Angolan political opinion. Each of those voices deserves a chance to be heard, although it must be clear that that can be so only if all the parties are committed to a democratic national discussion. That discussion can and should include all views from across the spectrum: Government, opposition, and civil society and other organizations. UNITA, if it took the steps expected of it, could rightly expect to look forward to a place in that dialogue. We reiterate our view that a military solution to the Angolan conflict is not possible or achievable.

It is regrettable that the humanitarian situation in Angola remains so bleak — this at the end of a year when good progress had been expected in relation to access to the enormous numbers of people at risk, and also in relation to the resettlement of displaced persons. It is clear that the positive developments we had hoped for have failed so far to materialize, although we welcome Mr. Gambari's news of the Government's

efforts. We strongly encourage the United Nations to continue to work with the authorities on establishing ways in which the horrific circumstances of the civilian population can be addressed. It is also our belief that the Council's continuing commitment to the implementation of the sanctions against UNITA is having its own desired impact.

Those measures are contributing in their own way to the new possibilities to which Mr. Gambari referred. We observe also that they appear to be playing their part in improving relations between Angola and those States which might in the past have supported UNITA in different ways. We welcome those developments, some of which are recent, and we commend those who are taking those steps.

We hold the view that the presidential statement (S/PRST/2001/36) adopted by the Council after its meeting on 15 November 2001 provided Mr. Gambari with a clear and balanced message to convey to Angolans of all views, many of whom he met and some of whom he could not meet. The responsibility of UNITA to cease violence was plainly spelled out. The Council's expectation that the authorities should work for economic reform and for transparent and accountable governance was another important element. In addition, the role of the Government, the political parties and civil society in advancing the peace process was also underlined. It is Ireland's hope that those aspects of the Council's views have been widely received in Angola.

This is the third occasion since September on which we have discussed Angola in this Chamber. We believe that that fact alone is a recognition of the Council's desire to see the situation in Angola move forward. Mr. Gambari's report on his visit gives some cause for optimism that a glimmer of light exists against the background of political and military stalemate. We would not wish to exaggerate that sense of hope. However, we believe it is incumbent upon the Angolan Government, other actors and us here in the Security Council and in the United Nations to do everything we can to ensure that no opportunity is lost.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): This afternoon we are going to have a wrap-up meeting on the work of the month, but since it is likely to be the last meeting of the year we thought it might be useful to review the successes and the failures of the year as well. We were going to say this afternoon that Angola was clearly not a success story. But today Ambassador Gambari has given us a glimmer of hope. Yet he has also created a problem for us, because we now have to re-write our speech for this afternoon.

I certainly agree with Ambassador Chowdhury, who said that Ambassador Gambari had been far too modest about his own personal contribution to what has happened. We have no doubt that it is as a result of his strong personal involvement that we see what he has called a new window of opportunity in Angola.

But this, as everyone has observed, is a 26-year-old conflict. There must have been other windows of opportunity that came and went. The question is, "How do we keep this window of opportunity truly open?" Here, I was going to ask Ambassador Gambari whether he could, in his responses, perhaps reflect a little more on the factors that have created the new window of opportunity. Some of the factors have been touched on in the discussion so far, for example the military defeats of UNITA; clearly, that is a new factor. Another factor is the willingness of the Government to get the United Nations engaged in the process of dialogue. Here, I must say I join Ambassador Eldon in thanking the Government of Angola for the access it gave Ambassador Gambari; I am glad he met President Dos Santos on the first day, not the last day. I hope that becomes a pattern for his visits there.

Were there any other factors? For example — just speaking out of ignorance — did the neighbours of Angola play a role? Has civil society been touched upon? It would be helpful if Mr. Gambari could tell us exactly what has created this new window of opportunity, so that we can, in a sense, strengthen those factors that created this window.

Secondly, I think everyone has agreed in their remarks today that the humanitarian situation, to put it very mildly, is very bad. The most alarming figure we heard this morning is, if I heard Ambassador Gambari correctly, that there are 4.1 million internally displaced persons out of a population of 12 million. That makes it one third of the population — 33 per cent. This must surely be the highest figure for any country in the world.

I wonder whether Ambassador Gambari can confirm that, because if that figure is right, it shows how large the problem is. Indeed, according to a World Food Programme report last week, the latest military campaigns against UNITA in central and eastern

Angola have actually led to another significant increase of internally displaced persons in these regions, with acute malnutrition rates reaching as high as 25 per cent in some refugee centres. I believe several previous speakers asked what more can be done to ameliorate the humanitarian situation. If Ambassador Gambari could respond to that, that would be very helpful.

Thirdly — again, this is unique in today's debate — everyone has emphasized the important role of civil society and the role of the churches. Here I agree with Ambassador Durrant's comment that when the technical teams goes to Angola, it should have more meetings with civil society members. But until I heard the representative of France, these civil society figures appeared to be faceless, nameless heroes. I am glad that one of them has been recognized and has received the Sakharov Prize.

But what else can we do to clearly help this positive new factor? Again, speaking off the cuff, for example, I wonder if it would be helpful to perhaps invite some members of civil society to come to the Council to speak to us, either in an Arria-formula meeting or in some other meeting. This may have two positive benefits. One, of course, is that we will hear directly from a party that has played a positive role, and, secondly, we hope that having a dialogue with them will further enhance their capacity to play an even more constructive role in the political process. I wonder whether Ambassador Gambari would like to comment on that suggestion.

Finally, Ambassador Chowdhury referred to the last report of the Secretary-General, where the Secretary-General said that the complexity of the situation clearly requires what he called "creative ways" to solve the problem.

I must thank Ambassador Gambari for coming to speak to us almost immediately, right off the plane, because we know he landed yesterday; we knew it was a tremendous imposition for him to come speak to us right away, but if the jet lag is not troubling him too much, if he has other creative thoughts, I hope he will share them with us.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation expresses its gratitude to Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari for his presence at this meeting and for the information he has given us. We are pleased that his visit was positive and has yielded good results.

Our interest in the briefing relates mainly to the expectations generated by the previous meeting, of 15 November, on the role the United Nations could play, particularly with respect to his next visit to the region, so that the peace process could move forward in accordance with the Lusaka Protocol and the pronouncements of the Council. What is really important to the Council is that the Angola peace process move beyond the deadlock in political and military terms, as the Secretary-General defined it in the last report on the activities of the United Nations Office in Angola (UNOA) in Luanda. It is clear that UNOA can contribute to much broader work only if the political conditions exist in the country to make that possible. We are also pleased that the consultations with the Government of Angola are considering a series of activities, including a disarmament and weapons collection programme, which can be expanded by the United Nations presence in the future.

We have previously expressed the view that it is a good idea to include civil society more in the peace process for at least two reasons: first, to reduce the impact of bellicose rhetoric and the solutions by force that at certain stages dominate the peace process; and secondly, because most of the victims in the confrontation between Government forces and the rebels have been from the civilian population, judging from the numbers of people killed in attacks, internally displaced persons, refugees in neighbouring countries and indirect victims of hunger, disease and exposure.

The information we have received today confirms the sad humanitarian situation that afflicts the Angolan people. The figure of 4 million internally displaced persons living in precarious situations — in camps or in poverty-stricken areas of towns and cities — is a cause for concern.

For that reason, along the same lines as Ambassador Eldon, I wish to ask if Ambassador Gambari could suggest to us ways of involving civil society. On past occasions, holding an Arria-formula meeting was mentioned, as also proposed by the delegation of the United Kingdom.

After having heard the briefing today, we are convinced that the Council must continue with formulas for the positive inclusion of the United Nations in the Angolan peace process. The Council should encourage the international community, particularly countries with a strong presence in Angola

and solid political and economic ties with that country, to contribute to the cause of peace.

Finally, we must continue to apply the sanctions against UNITA, with the certainty that the effectiveness of the sanctions regime will substantially improve the possibility of dialogue between the parties.

Mr. Granovksy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation is grateful to Under-Secretary-General — Special Adviser on Africa Mr. Ibrahim Gambari for his comprehensive briefing on the outcome of his visit to Angola. The very fruitful contacts he established with the Angolan authorities and representatives of civil society in Angola will definitely help strengthen the relationship of that country with the United Nations and will expand opportunities to help the Organization make progress towards a settlement of the Angolan conflict.

The approach of the Russian Federation to the Angolan settlement was set forth in detail in the recent statement made in the Council on behalf of the troika, and it remains unchanged.

We commend the constructive steps taken by the Angolan Government to establish dialogue with all sound political forces and civil society in Angola. We believe that Mr. Savimbi, by his rejection of the possibility offered by the President of Angola to resume dialogue on ways to conclude implementation of the basic principles of the Lusaka Protocol, has demonstrated a lack of political will to halt the armed confrontation. With each passing day, the international community is seeing ever more clearly that UNITA's actions have become a campaign of terror against its own people. In this regard, we deem the assessment made at the Council's September meeting on Angola to be exceptionally important.

In the context of international efforts to resolve the situation in Angola, Russia, in its national capacity and as a member of the troika of international observers of the peace process, intends to continue to adhere firmly to the policy of enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations sanctions regime against UNITA, aimed at cutting off channels of supply from outside sources to the anti-Government group. In this context, we intend to continue to support the effectively functioning sanctions monitoring mechanism that was established in conformity with Security Council resolution 1295 (2000).

Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having organized this public meeting of the Council, which is devoted to the situation in Angola. The holding of this meeting attests to the consistent interest of the Council with regard to the question of Angola and its commitment to the settlement of the armed conflict in that country. The conflict, which has continued for more than a quarter of a century, has inflicted much suffering and many losses on the population of the country and has impeded the development process.

I would also like to commend Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari for the information that he has communicated to us about his visit to Angola and the talks that he had during his stay there.

Despite the gradual improvement in the political-military situation, my delegation remains concerned at the persistent confrontations in Angola, which continue to have a catastrophic effect on the economic, social and humanitarian situation. We share the concerns expressed by Ambassador Gambari regarding the dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation, which has led to a considerable increase in the number of internally displaced persons — some 4.1 million persons.

Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, which refuses to honour the commitments undertaken under the Lusaka Protocol and continues to defy the international community and the resolutions of the Security Council, bears full responsibility for this situation. In spite of the weakening and reduction of its military capacities, UNITA is continuing its guerrilla activities, with the civilian population as its target. This situation is a source of major concern for the Tunisian delegation. We reiterate our condemnation of such actions, which are unacceptable.

We welcome the often reaffirmed commitment of the Angolan Government to the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol with a view to a peaceful solution to the conflict. In this regard, we welcome the implementation by the Angolan authorities of a peace programme based on a range of political, social and humanitarian initiatives aimed at implementing the Lusaka Protocol successfully.

We also welcome the initiatives adopted by civil society and the churches to promote peace and national reconciliation, and we support their appeal for the

urgent establishment of a ceasefire. We are convinced that the Angolan Government has fulfilled its share of the responsibility. It is now up to UNITA to respond positively to the appeals of the Angolan Government to renounce the military option and stop holding hostage the future of the entire country. We also believe that the continuation of this conflict constitutes a threat to the security and stability of southern Africa.

We have said on many occasions, and I repeat, that there can be no military solution to this conflict. While awaiting a dialogue between the two parties, we call once again for strict and rigorous implementation of the sanctions imposed on UNITA, which, in our view and in the light of the current circumstances, are the only means of cutting off the supply routes by which UNITA obtains weapons and war materiel.

In this context, we would like to emphasize and recognize the importance of the investigation work that has been carried out by the Monitoring Mechanism on Sanctions against UNITA.

Mr. Jingree (Mauritius): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting in order to take stock of the outcome of the mission of Ambassador Gambari, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser of the Secretary-General. My delegation also thanks Ambassador Gambari for his very comprehensive briefing this morning.

We note from Ambassador Gambari's briefing that the Government of Angola is fully committed to achieving national reconciliation. Likewise, we welcome the willingness of civil society and the churches to participate in the peace process. Mauritius believes firmly that the Government, civil society and the churches must be encouraged in their efforts towards national reconciliation.

The conflict in Angola has been dragging on for almost a quarter of a century now. We are convinced that there is no military solution to the conflict and that the Lusaka Protocol provides the basis for its resolution. It is most unfortunate that UNITA refuses to abide by the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol. Instead, UNITA continues on the path of violence. Over recent months, several terrorist acts have been committed by UNITA. The people of Angola have suffered for too long, and they cannot stand it any longer.

The Council must, in the light of the mission of the Special Adviser, take the appropriate measures to address the situation. We note from Ambassador Gambari's briefing that there is a convergence of opinion that the United Nations should play a more proactive role. Such an opportunity must be seized to make progress in the peace process.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, my delegation is seriously concerned about the gravity of this problem, with the number of internally displaced persons having reached 4.1 million in Angola. For my delegation, it is very clear that UNITA is mainly responsible for this situation. We welcome the enormous efforts of the Government of Angola to alleviate the plight of internally displaced persons. Mauritius joins the others in the call for the international community to help improve the humanitarian situation in Angola, with special assistance to the internally displaced persons.

As mentioned by Ambassador Gambari, the technical mission of the Secretariat will be dispatched shortly to Angola to undertake discussions with the Angolan authorities on the engagement of the United Nations on a number of issues. My delegation expresses its full support for the technical mission and looks forward to a programme of action that would translate the window of opportunity into concrete measures.

Mr. Cunningham (United States): Let me join others in saying how much we welcome the briefing by Under-Secretary-General Gambari on his trip and value his conclusions and advice. I agree with many of the comments made around the table and will try not to repeat all of them.

We also find the report distressing in some respects that are rather obvious, but there is some promise in some other respects. The Lusaka Protocol obviously remains the key to a political process and the focus for all of us as we look to the future of the peace process. That undoubtedly will remain the focus and demand of the Council and of the international community. I think that the briefing today indicates that, unfortunately, UNITA still lacks the political will to begin a serious political dialogue. Therefore all of us — the Council and its individual nations — need to keep up the pressure and to continue to support an effective sanctions regime.

Until political will comes into play, I think that we should focus on the steps that the United Nations can take to improve the lives of the Angolan people

and to assist the Government of Angola to improve the quality of its governance and to foster political trust. I think that we all agree on the clear need to continue to insist with both sides that a military solution is unacceptable and, more importantly, unachievable.

We are glad to see that progress is developing in the relationship between the United Nations and the Angola Government, and we would like to encourage the Under-Secretary-General to follow up in three areas where the Government of Angola has indicated that United Nations assistance would be valuable: the Peace and Reconciliation Fund, election assistance, and the development of pilot transition projects for demobilizing soldiers.

We welcome the intention of the United Nations to begin work early next year on the most promising area of assistance: the design of transition projects. In this regard, a United States-funded transition project for demobilized UNITA troops and their families in Huambo province may serve as a useful model.

Over the longer term, we think that it would be helpful for the Under-Secretary-General to use his influence to encourage forward movement on confidence-building steps in the humanitarian assistance sector. This would help the people of Angola as well as begin to build political trust. It might, for instance, be useful to focus on a proposal for ceasefire vaccination days. Under this idea, UNITA and the Government would agree to ceasefires in specific areas of the country, during which time children could receive vaccinations, especially for polio, which afflicts too many Angolan children.

The Under-Secretary-General's visit to Luanda underscored that the United Nations stands ready to step in should there be a prospect for serious political dialogue on the basis of the Lusaka Protocol. We hope very much that that could happen. All of us can and should contribute to promoting national reconciliation and assist the peace process when the time is right and the opportunity exists. My Government stands ready to do all it can to facilitate a political end to the conflict in Angola.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should now like to make a statement in my capacity as representative of Mali.

First, I should like to thank Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Africa, for his very useful update on the situation in Angola.

Secondly, I should like to make a few brief comments, on the understanding that my delegation shares most of the views expressed this morning.

My first comment would be to recall that the Angolan conflict has lasted for 26 years — more than a quarter century. Despite the persistence of the conflict, caused by UNITA, my delegation still pins great hopes on the prospects for peace in Angola. We welcome the commitment by all parties to the Lusaka Protocol, which remains the only viable basis for a political settlement that would make possible the return of peace to Angola.

We urge UNITA without delay to start discussions with the Angolan Government to implement the relevant provisions of that Protocol and those of the various Security Council resolutions and declarations on the subject. We welcome the positive gestures on the part of the Angolan Government and encourage it to continue, in consultation with all components of Angolan society — in particular civil society, religious denominations and the United Nations — to promote the peace process in Angola.

My second comment relates to the sanctions imposed against UNITA. We believe that these sanctions are appropriate, because they make a positive contribution to reducing UNITA's military capacity. That is why it is important that this question continue to be accorded priority in the Council.

Thirdly, I believe that the Security Council should continue to devote particular attention to the humanitarian situation in Angola. We fully associate ourselves with the appeal made to all parties to facilitate the unimpeded delivery of aid to people in conflict areas. We have taken note of the information just provided by Ambassador Gambari on this question.

Fourthly, we associate ourselves also with the appeal to the international community to support efforts aimed at the economic recovery and the democratization of Angolan society. Furthermore, greater involvement on the part of the United Nations is necessary in the process of weapons collection and the reintegration of former combatants, since a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is be essential to any peace process.

Fifthly and lastly, Mali will continue to follow very closely the situation in Angola, even after it leaves the Council, out of solidarity with the fraternal people of Angola, whose suffering should be eased, and also to allow my friend and compatriot, Maitre Alioune Blondin Beye, who was the architect of the Lusaka Protocol, to rest in peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari to respond to the comments made and the questions asked.

Mr. Gambari: I want to begin by thanking all of the members of the Council for the kind words addressed to me for the work that I carry out on behalf of the Secretary-General in trying to move towards a political settlement of the conflict in Angola.

A number of issues have been raised, and I will summarize them in three categories: first, the humanitarian situation; secondly, the political situation, and in particular the peace process; and thirdly, the role of civil society.

With respect to the humanitarian situation, I should like to confirm that the figure provided me in Angola on the number of internally displaced persons is indeed 4.1 million.

I should like also to associate myself with the assessment that, although in some areas the situation is bad and getting worse, the efforts of the Government of Angola really constitute good and positive news in terms of the acceptance by the Government of Angola that it has the primary responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance to its own people, the internally displaced persons.

As I also mentioned, every effort is being made — and in this respect I was put in touch with personnel in the Office of the President — to ensure the improvement of the physical infrastructure to promote the delivery of humanitarian assistance: roads and bridges, and the important airport in Kuito, which is being repaired. I believe that we need to continue to encourage the Government to do more to take advantage of the window of opportunity in the areas where humanitarian assistance can be delivered safely, in cooperation with the United Nations, the international aid agencies, the international non-governmental organizations and all of the stakeholders.

As to whether the Security Council would want a specific briefing on the humanitarian situation, as has been done in the past, that, of course, is for the members of the Council to decide. I agree with those who have observed that the crux of this matter is really the peace process and the way forward, because if the peace process accelerates, the issue of humanitarian assistance will also be positively affected.

I would like to respond to some of the questions asked. On the issue of next steps for getting dialogue off the ground and the new role for the United Nations, I believe that the Government of Angola is very clear that what the United Nations needs to do is to assume the role of mediator, without ruling out a complementary or supplementary role for civil society, with other Governments as facilitators. We have pretty much been given the go-ahead to explore how we can get such a dialogue going, and in the next few days or weeks we will be thinking, within the Secretariat, about the necessary steps. Once we get clearance from the Secretary-General, we will proceed accordingly.

On the question as to whether the advice to move the peace process off the streets and into serious contacts and negotiations enjoys the general consensus of those to whom we talked, I would say that the answer is "Yes". The challenge is how to establish credible contacts between the Government and UNITA and to make such contacts regular and, we hope, productive.

With regard to the role of the churches and civil society in such a dialogue, again I would like to underscore the need to keep each role separate. Their role is supposed to be that of facilitator, rather than of mediator.

The issue was also raised about creative ideas for the way forward. In this regard, I would like to say that what the Secretary-General has directed me to do is, among other things, to build upon the support of those who would like to be allies of the Secretary-General in trying to examine the prospects of these windows of opportunity — in other words, those who are willing to stake political capital on encouraging both sides to move in the direction of talks, even if, initially, they will be talks about talks.

In this regard, I would also like to mention to members of the Council that the Government of Angola has sent a formal invitation for the Secretary-General to visit Angola in the near future.

The Secretary-General was awaiting the outcome of my visit and, of course, he will have to look at his own calendar. But clearly — and I mentioned this to my interlocutors in Luanda — a possible visit by the Secretary-General will be conditional upon progress on all fronts. These would include the peace process and, perhaps, some of those areas in which the technical team from the United Nations is having fruitful discussions with the Government of Angola — elections, the fund for peace and the pilot programme for demobilized soldiers. I think these are opportunities that we need to explore further.

A question was asked about the factors that have created new windows of opportunity. I would suggest that such factors include the two-pronged United Nations strategy of improving relations with the Government of Angola and imposing sanctions against UNITA. Neither of these strategies was supposed to be an end in itself but, rather, a means to nudge the Government of Angola and, more particularly, Savimbi's UNITA, towards a political settlement of this conflict. I believe that the two-pronged strategy appears to be bearing fruit.

I would also consider that the military weakness of UNITA provides a window of opportunity. In any talks with Savimbi's UNITA, the Government of Angola would not be talking from a position of weakness but, in fact, from a position of strength. I believe it is also fair to say that the military pressure against UNITA has clearly increased considerably.

I would also like to mention the important role of civil society; I will come back to this issue later. Members of civil society are continuing to put pressure on both sides to try to end the war and agree to a ceasefire, because the people of Angola have simply suffered too much and for too long as a result of this conflict. I would also like to refer to the role of the neighbouring countries. Their support has been critical, and their clear position on the need to maintain sanctions has also been helpful. I would also add that I believe that the strong support by the Council for a political settlement each time it has spoken or made a pronouncement has also been a contributing factor.

As to the question of Savimbi's seriousness about dialogue and ceasefire, I guess my response would be that we will have to find out. And the best way to find out is to actually try to make some contacts and clarify situations.

How will the current sanctions be affected if the opportunity for dialogue bears fruit? I think we need to draw attention to the various elements of United Nations sanctions. The first is the political element — the travel ban on some members of UNITA. Secondly, there is the dimension of closing down their offices in some key capitals. And thirdly, there is the military dimension of the sanctions. I believe that a time may come when the political aspect might have to be reconsidered, perhaps, regarding the suspension of the travel ban on some UNITA officials. I would not say that that time has come yet, but the issue might have to be considered at an appropriate time by the Council — those officials who need to travel for the sake of peace — though this will have to be clearly identified and specified.

Finally, with regard to the role of civil society, as I mentioned earlier, I believe that the Government has no objection to the role of churches — I use the plural — and all other members of civil society as facilitators.

As for the Arria-formula meeting with the Security Council, that is, of course, in the hands of Council members. But I would suggest that we proceed on that issue with great caution, because we must be careful not to damage the relationship which has been carefully built up between the United Nations and the Government of Angola.

Furthermore, I would suggest that we have not yet exhausted the United Nations capacity to continue to encourage the work of civil society in the peace process — through, for example, the policy statements emanating from the Secretary-General and the Security Council. The United Nations Development Programme could also provide support for serious national non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the area of peace and the promotion of capacity-building and human rights, and even in humanitarian assistance.

Finally, there is the possibility of a meeting with the Secretary-General. That has been requested by leaders of the churches — again, not one church — and civil society. I think that we should try to exhaust those avenues for encouraging civil society at this point.

I want to take this opportunity to wish all members of the Council a very happy holiday season.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Gambari for the additional information he has provided and for his wishes.

There are no more speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Tribute to the memory of Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first President of Senegal

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the members of the Security Council, I should like to express profound grief and sorrow at the death of Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first President of the Republic of Senegal. President Senghor dedicated his entire life to his country, to Africa and to the cause of world peace. His loss will be greatly felt by us all.

On behalf of the Security Council, I should like to convey to the President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, to the bereaved family and to the people of Senegal the Council's profound condolences.

I now invite the members of the Council to rise and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Léopold Sédar Senghor.

The members of the Council observed a minute of silence.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.